(b) and (c) The required manpower, including civilian personnel, is sanctioned for all new projects of strategic importance. 2901 posts for the Naval Base Project at Karwar and 1220 posts for the Naval Academy at Ezhimala have been sanctioned by the Government during the last two years. These sanctioned have enhanced the strength of civilian personnel of the Navy by 2634 posts.

Fleet upgradation by IAF

2313. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that IAF is on the move to upgrade all its aircrafts over the next five years;

(b) whether it means that there is a dilution of the need for fresh inductions;

(c) the details of aircrafts that IAF is going to upgrade; and

(d) the period which the IAF is going to take to complete its fleet upgradation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Mid-life upgradation of aircraft is undertaken from time to time in order to bridge the gap in technology to make the fleet of aircraft more viable for the next few years and also slow down the phasing out of the aircraft from the service.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) The Air Force has identified the MIG-29, Mirage-2000 fighter aircraft, AN-32, IL-76 transport aircraft and Mi-17/Mi-17 IV helicopter for upgrade during the 10th and 11th Plan periods.

Talks with American companies selling weapons systems

†2314. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a group of American

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

companies selling weapon-systems and fighter planes held talks with India recently, if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the American companies are in the race for having deals in billions with India;

(c) if so, the main reasons therefor; and

(d) details of the amount in billion dollars spent by Government on purchasing army equipments and out of which the purchase made from America in dollars?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Government is aware that certain American companies have held informal discussion regarding India's interest in acquiring modern weapon systems.

(d) Details of the Government expenses on purchase of arms had weapon systems are classified in nature and it would not be in the national interest to divulge them on the Floor of the House.

Middlemen in defence deals

2315. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that countrary to formal orders, middlemen are still thriving in defence deals of the Government;

(b) if so, reasons therefor and Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) steps proposed to eliminate completely the agency system in defence purchases?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Defence Procurement Procedure 2005 followed for capital acquisition allows direct dealing with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)/ Authorized Vendors/ Government sponsored Export Agencies (Applicable in case of countries where domestic laws do not permit direct exports by OEMs). Further the procedure incorporates several provisions to ensure transparency and cut down dealys in the procurement process. Some of these provisions include the following:—